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A Different Kind of Home: The Impact of Residential Colleges on Student Learning and Development

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A DIFFERENT KIND OF HOME: THE IMPACT OF RESIDENTIAL COLLEGES ON STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of residential colleges on student learning and development. Residential colleges are living-learning programs that have a few common characteristics: a commitment to multidisciplinarity; multigenerational organization (an assumption that students from all classifications—first-year through graduate students—strengthen the learning environment); live-in faculty leadership; and mission-centric spaces that speak to the holistic nature of the learning philosophy" (Penven, Stephens, Shushok, & Keith, 2013, p. 116). Two research questions guided this study:

1. What is the impact of residential colleges on student learning?
2. What is the impact of residential colleges on student development?

This study utilized a phenomenological design. The researcher interviewed 15 students at a large public university on the central East Coast of the United States. Three themes emerged: impact of structure, belonging and identity, and the impact of multigenerational and interdisciplinary living. These three themes connected to one meta-theme, community. Implications of this study include students' desire to belong, positive outcomes of student-faculty interactions, and the importance of self-governance.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Americans collectively hold more college debt than credit card debt (Lindstrom, 2013). College remains expensive, and the men and women in Washington have heard the frustrations of the American people. President Obama, in his 2014 State of the Union Address (Obama, 2014), orated that colleges need to become cheaper, available to every hard-working person, and provide "the real-world education and hands-on training that can lead directly to a job and career" (Obama, 2014, para. 63). While the president focuses on job creation and better employment through higher education, students recognize that college does not all focus on job training.

When surveyed, 82.5% of nearly 200,000 college freshmen listed "learn more about things that interest them" as one of their motivations for going to college (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013); 72.8% deemed "gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas" as a strong factor in their choosing to go to college. While students may pay upwards of $44,000 a year for a private education, they receive more than a traditional four-walled learning experience for their tuition, fees, books, and room and board (AHE, 2013). Colleges and universities exist as unique institutions designed in such a way to impact students' intellectual learning as well as their cognitive, moral, ethical, and identity development (Astin, 1999; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

College Impact on Student Learning and Development

The impact of college has received wide research attention (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The college impact approach to research "emphasize[s] interactions between students and the institution's environment (broadly conceived)" (Kuh, 1993, p. 280). Researchers used the college impact approach to "discover outcomes associated with out-of-class experiences" (p. 280). College impact research allowed higher educational professionals to begin to grasp what types of conditions contribute to student learning and development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998).

In order to better understand the concept of impact, one must delve into the world of student outcomes. While perhaps ideal to simply input a lecture into a student's mind and have the student regurgitate expert knowledge on the topic of the lecture, this method simply does not reflect how college students learn. Astin (1999) noted learning and development require involvement. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in the learning process. Specifically, learning outcomes represent the sum of a student's inputs and environment. Furthermore, "The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program" (p. 519).

Since environment impacts involvement, universities utilize various programs to create challenging, supportive environments for students to develop—with residence life as one such program. Astin (1999) viewed living on campus as "probably the most important and pervasive" environmental factor to impact student involvement. In residence life, students can engage in their environment in a unique way as they live with

many other students. While surrounded by their peers, students have ample opportunity to become involved in their learning by studying and conversing with other students and receiving mentorship from student leaders such as resident assistants. Residence life environments also surround students with others who differ from them (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). This immersion in a diverse group often introduces students to different belief systems, causing cognitive dissonance. Led by a residence hall director, residence life programs help students process conflicting, changing beliefs and life circumstances.

Residence Life Environments

Living-learning programs, a specific type of residence life program, exist as specialized residential programs that incorporate an intentional learning component. These programs come in many forms, though some common types center on a specific academic discipline, topic (such as multiculturalism) or type of living arrangement (such as a first-year experience or a "no-substance" living-learning program). Living-learning programs create even more opportunities for students to develop ethically, intellectually, and in their own beliefs through self-authorship. This high-contact, highly relational environment motivates and creates opportunities to involve students greatly in their own learning (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003; Pike, 1999; Stassen, 2003).

One type of living-learning program, while very old, has begun to make a comeback in American colleges and universities. Residential colleges date back to almost A.D. 1200 (Association of College and University Housing Officers-International [ACUHO-I], 1998). These colleges eventually became the student living model of both Oxford and Cambridge University, followed by Harvard and Yale in the early 20th century (O'Hara, 2006). Residential colleges, through their holistic approach to student

learning, help create spaces in which students feel challenged by peers, faculty, and staff, to grow and develop as thinkers and as individuals. Traditionally, these buildings contain "classrooms, library support, faculty offices and residences, and student residences" in the same facility (ACUHO-I, 1998, p. 5). Many residential colleges also contain their own common areas (for both faculty and students), dining halls, and green spaces, all to provide an environment that encourages students to engage with peers and faculty.

Four key components comprise a residential college (O'Hara, 2015). The first characteristic, decentralization, allows for residential colleges to provide students with more personal care. These "small, decentralized, residential colleges counteract the effects of educational massification by bringing students and faculty from all academic disciplines together into rich and cohesive social communities" (O'Hara, 2006, para.7). In another trait, faculty leadership, a faculty master often helps to run the college by living in the college with the students to promote frequent formal, informal interactions; other faculty participate in college life due to the presence of their offices in the college.

The third and fourth characteristics heavily contribute to student learning and development. Social stability, the third characteristic, refers to an "annual rhythm of events that gives students a sense that they are part of something bigger than themselves" (O'Hara, 2006). This stability supports students and makes them feel safe, allowing them to take risks that could produce incongruence and cognitive dissonance essential components to self-authorship, intellectual, ethical, spiritual, moral, and identity development (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Fowler, 1987; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Perry, 1999; Slugoski, Marcia, & Koopman, 1984).

While residential colleges have the capacity to make an impact on students, residential colleges are still quite rare in the United States. A variety of factors contribute to this reality. First, they prove very expensive, as the buildings tend to be new or rennovated, and the cost to involved faculty in the environment remains high. Universities also tend to resist cultural change. Changing from a traditional residence hall model to a residential college model requires creativity, a willingness to fail, and an immense amount of collaboration. Finally, residential colleges require those who participate in them to challenge traditional views of authority. In a residnetial colleges, students have power, and faculty members relinquish much of their authority at the door, something many faculty members seem reluctant to do. However, while rare, these models receive growing attention across the nation for their positive student outcomes.

Research Questions

While an expensive model of residence life, the residential college may offer a solution to student learning and development in the 21st century. Residential colleges have the potential to develop students personally while maintaining the rigorous academe universities desire for their students. However, little research addresses the impact of residential colleges on students. Thus, the following questions guided the current study:

1) What impact do residential colleges have on student learning?
2) What impact do residential colleges have on student development?

The study separated student learning and development, as did several others studies (Inkelas, Vogt, Longerbeam, Owen, & Johnson, 2006; Kuh, 1995). While student learning and development heavily overlap, student learning appears primarily cognitive, while student development seems primarily psychosocial.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Out-of-class experiences can prove just as important as the students' experiences inside the four-walled classroom. Outside the classroom, students view their lives as laboratories, testing various beliefs and ideas and learning from their failures and successes (Kuh, 1995). These experiences present various challenge and opportunities for development:

> Out-of-class experiences present students with personal and social challenges, encourage them to develop more complicated views on personal, academic, and other matters, and provide opportunities for synthesizing and integrating material presented in the formal academic program (classes, laboratories, studios) (p. 146).

These out-of-class experiences occur in their own sort of classroom. While educators may struggle to develop a syllabus for life, institutions should ensure student learning environments remain conducive to supporting these beneficial learning experiences.

Students Learn Outside the Classroom

Creating successful learning environments. In order for students to connect what they learn in the classroom to their lives, student affairs professionals consider themselves educators and intentionally create seamless learning environments that foster

both student learning and development (American College Personnel Association [ACPA], 1994; Kuh, 1996). A learning environment refers to the context (both the physical location and the socially constructed setting) in which learning occurs. Chickering and Gamson (1987) identified seven principles of good practice for educators of undergraduates to create exemplary learning environments. Among these principles, they argued good practice in undergraduate education "encourages contacts between students and faculty, develops reciprocity and cooperation among students, uses active learning techniques . . . [and] respects diverse talents and ways of learning" (p. 2).

Baxter Magolda (2007), in the Theory of Self-Authorship, recognized the impact environments can have on student development. Self-authorship refers to "the capacity to internally define [one's] own beliefs, identity, and relationships" (p. xvi). Out of Baxter Magolda's theory came the Learning Partnerships Model. This model asserts environments as most effective in promoting self-authorship if they challenge students' dependence on authority. When students become less dependent on authority and put more weight on their own opinions and the opinions of friends and mentors, students begin to involve and engage their own development and learning.

A successful learning environment does not derive construction solely from the educational institution. Students help construct their learning environment through their involvement and engagement in their learning.

Student involvement and engagement. The foundational theory of student involvement by Astin (1999) highlighted a key to student success. Astin defined involvement as "the quality and quantity of physical and psychological energy that students invest in the college experience" (p. 528). Astin's theory focused on behavior,

specifically time-on-task, as opposed to beliefs or feelings. At its core, the theory synthesizes to a simple equation: inputs plus environment equals outcomes. The more involved a student becomes involved in his or her learning and development, the more the student learns from the experience. Student involvement links to a wide variety of student outcomes in college.

According to Gellin (2003), involved students gain valuable critical thinking skills during their time in college. Students involved in clubs, organizations, student employment, or living on campus all see substantial growth in critical thinking capacities. However, students who live on campus see a larger gain in critical thinking skills than any other involvement category. Gellin (2003) attributed this difference to the fact that students living on campus have more opportunities to get involved than other students. The constant face-to-face contact students receive on campus puts social pressure on students to become involved in their environment.

Students' involvement relates significantly to their development of academic self-concept (House, 2000). Students who spend more hours reading (i.e., have more involvement in their learning) have much higher views of their writing abilities than students who do not. Students who volunteer outside of class also have higher perceptions of their achievement and more confidence in their intellectual ability.

Friedlander and MacDougall (1992) linked student involvement to students developing a more liberal view of diversity. Students benefitted from face-to-face contact with students who differed from them. Specifically, 65% of students who had above-college-average contact with students who differed from them in age, ethnicity,

religion, and political beliefs made substantial progress toward becoming aware of different cultures, philosophies, and ways of life.

Student involvement also aids personal identity development in college. The theory of psychological Nigrescence by Cross (1995) has a final stage of internalization when Black students internalize and more fully develop a balanced view of what being Black means (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn 2010). Engaging in leadership opportunities and student organizations helps African-American students better internalize their Blackness and form alliances with students outside of their racial group (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Renn and Bilodeau (2005) discovered through their interviews with various student leaders that involvement in LGBTQ organizations and their leadership opportunities aids LGBTQ identity development.

The Residence-Hall as a Classroom

As examined previously, involvement and engagement prove imperative to learning and developing in college (Astin, 1999; Baxter Magolda, 2004; Baxter Magolda, 2007; Gellin, 2003; House, 2000; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). Living in a residence hall provides students opportunities to become involved and engaged almost 24 hours a day. In fact, living on campus in a residence hall offers the single most important environmental factor affecting student academic engagement (Astin, 1999). Because of the constant face-to-face interaction with peers and contact with a diverse group of people, residence halls become, in effect, their own kinds of classrooms in which both learning and development occur. Chickering (1974) deemed living off campus as one of the most important factors that hinders student involvement due to the lack of opportunities that encourage student involvement. Students living on campus tend to feel

more satisfied with their campus climate, report more personal growth and development, and participate in more extra-curricular activities than their off-campus colleagues (Blimling, 1993).

Students who live on campus become impacted academically by their presence in the residence hall. Using data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, Turley and Wodtke (2010) discovered Black students who live on campus in a residence hall have statistically higher grade point averages (GPAs) than Black students who live off campus. Many affective impacts of residence halls appear indirect and dependent on students' involvement in their learning and their environment (Pascarella, 1985).

Living on campus "maximizes opportunities for social, cultural, and extracurricular involvement" (Pascarella, Terenzini, & Blimling, 1994, p. 26). Living on campus, in turn, impacts various student development measures. Student persistence remains one of the most widely researched measures of student development and success (Tinto, 1998). Astin (1993) linked student persistence with a sense of belonging. Students who feel a sense of belonging within the institution and their peer group have a greater likelihood to persist to graduation. Tinto (1993) identified integration into the social and academic facets of a university as a key component of persistence. Students living in residence halls can assimilate into the social aspect of the institution better than students who live off campus and commute to class. They have more opportunities to engage with their environment and, therefore, have a greater likelihood of persistence. Specifically, integration in the fall semester among first year students leads to more involvement during the spring semester and higher rates of persistence (Berger & Milem, 1999). Notably, even when considering a wide range of student characteristics such as

pre-college academic performance, socioeconomic status, and educational aspirations, the relationship between students living on campus and their persistence remains "positive and statistically significant" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 421).

While involvement and engagement proves significant in students benefitting academically and socially from their experiences, students also receive various indirect benefits from their experiences. Students who live in residence halls enjoy more independence from their parents, allowing for decision-making processes to develop (Flanagan, Schulenberg, & Fuligni, 1993). Students who live on campus their first year in college also have larger gains in critical thinking skills than their commuter counterparts (Pascarella et al., 1993) . Some students in particular benefit greatly from living on campus. In a study by Flowers (2004), African-American students who lived on campus reported "significantly higher gains in personal and social development than African-American students who did not live on campus" (p. 286). Depending on how supportive the residence life environment feels, LGBT students can feel encouraged to discover their sexuality and come out to their peers (Evans & Broido, 1999).

Living-Learning Programs

While living on campus has a myriad of benefits, "residential impact is strongest in those living settings purposefully structured to encourage student encounters with people different from themselves and with ideas different from those they currently hold" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 603). Some universities establish living-learning programs to this end. Difficult to define, living-learning programs (LLP) can take many forms. LLPs refer to "programs in which undergraduate students live together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participate in academic and/or

extra-curricular programming designed especially for them" (NSLLP, 2007). Another definition of an LLP comes as "a residential community with an intellectual or academic element or focus" (Moore, 2013, p. 5).

Living-learning programs "are characterized by scholarly community, deep learning, strong sense of community, the careful integration of the intellectual and social dimensions of university life, and democratic education with a spirit of innovation and experimentation" (Laufgraben & Shapiro, 2004, p. 130). While there exist many types of LLPs (such as living-learning centers, engaged learning groups, and Residential Colleges), all attempt to connect the physical, traditional classroom with the students' living space in a more substantive and explicit way than that of traditional residence halls. An extensive amount of research addressed the benefits of LLPs compared with living in traditional residence halls.

Cognitive development. According to the theory of intellectual and ethical development by Perry (1999), students move from dualistic thinking to more complex, nuanced beliefs and thoughts, eventually leading to commitment. This growth occurs through cognitive dissonance or situations that challenge students to think outside of their pre-formed dualistic worldview. In LLPs, students can experience cognitive dissonance through interactions with peers and professors, many of whom have different beliefs and worldviews from their own (Baxter Magolda, 2007). A study at three large research universities found students in living-learning programs statistically more likely to seem open to new ideas and appreciate different cultures (Inkelas et al., 2006). Also, these students reported significant growth in critical thinking, the application of knowledge,

and the enjoyment of challenging intellectual pursuits. Pike (1999) also found increased intellectual development among LLP students.

Inkelas and Weisman (2003) examined three different designs of living-learning programs: an academic honors program, a transition program for first-year students, and a curriculum-based program catering to math and science majors. Using a survey instrument, they discovered students in the honors and transition programs often used critical thinking and discussed sociocultural issues more than other students, including those in the curriculum-based program. These findings found support in a later study by Brower and Inkelas (2010); LLP students used critical thinking skills and took advantage of new opportunities to apply their new knowledge to new settings (i.e. interdisciplinary learning, applying knowledge gained in one class to work in another class) more than their counterparts in traditional residence halls.

Academic performance. While some studies indicate little to no impact of a living-learning program on increased academic performance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), some research indicated academic performance benefits. Stassen (2003) analyzed students in three different living-learning programs, looking for various outcomes and benefits for first-year students. A positive connection emerged between LLP involvement and academic success, particularly among the least selective and most modestly structured of the three LLPs. Furthermore, each LLP showed a significant impact in the social and academic integration of students.

Pasque and Murphy (2005) conducted their study at a research institution, obtaining surveys from over 3,000 students. While analyzing, they discovered that participating in an LLP significantly predicted academic success, even after controlling

for previous academic success. Also, students who self-identity as LGB also had higher academic performance scores than those of LGB students in traditional residence halls.

Campus life and student perceptions. Students involved in LLPs generally report better perceptions of their campus and living environments. Using both an intellectual press scale and a sense of community scale, Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) noted that a living-learning experience would "positively influence a range of freshmen year educational outcomes" (p. 351). Among these outcomes lies a freshman's sense of community. Freshmen involved in LLPs more likely have a positive view of their community than students in a traditional residence hall. Freshman residents in LLPs also more likely persist to their second year than students in traditional residence halls.

Inkelas and Weisman (2003) discovered that "living-learning students tended to find their residence environment to be more supportive than nonparticipants" (p. 346), though the honors students in the study did not perceive their environment as supportive. This contradiction could result from the highly competitive and comparative nature of honors students as they often see a need to do what they must to get ahead. Students in the LLPs examined by Inkelas and Weisman (2003) also more likely enjoyed a smooth transition to college during their first year than those in traditional residence halls.

In a pilot for the National Survey of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP), Inkelas et al. (2006) surveyed students at four research universities and discovered those in LLPs "had significantly more positive perceptions of their residence hall climates (both academically and socially) and tended to use their residence hall resources more often than TRH [traditional residence hall] students" (p. 63). While LLP students enrolled with higher test scores and GPAs, they also notably use more residence hall resources.

In a later study, Longerbeam, Inkelas, and Bower (2007) examined secondhand benefits of living-learning programs, that is, the benefits to students who live in the same building as an LLP but do not participate. These students generally had a more positive view of their residence hall than students in a traditional residence hall. They also had a greater amount of diversity interactions. While the Longerbeam et al. (2007) study does not address race, Johnson (2007), in a study of women in LLPs using data from the 2004 NSLLP survey, pointed out African-American, Asian-American, Latina, and multiethnic students more likely have interactions with diverse peers than white students in the LLP.

Beliefs and behavior. Engagement in living-learning programs can also positively influence students' willingness and decisions to engage in both positive and negative aspects of college life. Pike (2009) explored the connection between students' living arrangements and their openness to diversity. He discovered students in LLPs have greater openness to diversity than students who live off campus and students who live in traditional residence halls. Longerbeam et al. (2007) also recognized the same benefit, albeit a secondhand benefit to students not involved in the LLP.

Using data from the 2004 NSLLP, Rowan-Kenyon, Soldner, and Inkelas (2007) examined whether certain types of living-learning programs had an impact on students' sense of civic engagement. Students who participated in civic-engagement-focused LLPs had a higher sense of civic engagement than students in other LLPs and students who lived in traditional residence halls. This finding seemed to indicate LLPs with a particular focus have an impact on participating students in that realm of students' lives.

In a later study, Brower (2008) used the 2004 NSLLP data to examine the practice of binge drinking on college campuses. While more LLP students reported not drinking

as compared to non-LLP students (31% vs. 24%), the percentages concerning binge drinking appear much closer in range. Concerning binge drinking, 62% of LLP students reported binge drinking compared to 70% of non-LLP students; 40% of LLP students started drinking after entering college compared to 45% of non-LLP students. While the presented numbers seem close, LLP students suffered fewer consequences, such as academic problems, social problems, and having sex they regret, than non-LLP students. While perhaps hard to celebrate anything associated with underage drinking, Brower (2008) considered these high numbers and noted that, despite the wide range of quality and types of living-learning programs sampled, "something happens in living-learning programs that positively impacts college drinking and its impacts on students" (p. 45).

Faculty-student interaction. With many living-learning programs involving faculty (Haynes & Janosik, 2012; Soldner & Szelènyi, 2008; Sriram, Shushok, Perkins, & Scales, 2011), students have the opportunity to engage faculty in a unique way outside of the traditional classroom. These interactions, often informal in nature (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980), can help students build relationships with faculty members. However, the quality and impact of these interactions proves more important to the building of relationships than frequency. Students in living-learning programs rated their interactions with faculty and the faculty's concern for student development higher than non-LLP students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980).

Garrett and Zabriskie (2003), in a study of students in living-learning programs over a period of three academic years, discovered students in LLPs more likely had formal and informal interactions with faculty members than their non-LLP peers. They also pointed out that non-LLP students who lived in the same building as an LLP seemed

significantly more likely to have informal/mentor interactions than students who lived in traditional residence halls. This finding pointed to faculty interaction as a secondhand benefit of LLPs (Longerbeam et al., 2007).

Along with these quantifiable benefits, students in LLPs benefit in other ways from their interactions with faculty and staff. Students who interact with faculty and staff on a regular basis tend to feel more valued by faculty and staff than if they lived in a non-LLP environment (Wawrzynski, Jessup-Anger, Stolz, Helman, & Beaulieu, 2009). Students said their "professors are there for [them] . . . it means a lot" (p. 151). These professors sometimes called students when they noticed a grade slipping,. While this outpouring of support could be attributed to one or two faculty members and their kind-hearted gestures, LLPs seemingly help connect students and faculty in an impactful way. However, students alone do not benefit or feel affected by these interactions.

Faculty members involved with LLPs appear greatly impacted by their work in these unique environments (Sriram et. al, 2011; Haynes & Janosik, 2012). In a qualitative study of faculty-in-residence (those who live with students), faculty members "conveyed how the physical environment, expectations of community, collaboration with housing and residence life professionals, and their increased availability all led to more interaction which in turn led to deeper relationships with students" (Sriram et. al, 2011, p. 46). Through involvement with LLPs, faculty develop as educators and discover deeper commitment to bridging the gap between the classroom and life experiences.

Residential Colleges

Living-learning programs began with the residential college model. Residential colleges, made famous by the Oxford and Cambridge model of student living and

learning (also called the Oxbridge Model [Duke, 1996]), have a few common characteristics: "a commitment to multidisciplinarity; multigenerational organization (an assumption that students from all classifications—first-year through graduate students—strengthen the learning environment); live-in faculty leadership; and mission-centric spaces that speak to the holistic nature of the learning philosophy" (Penven et al., 2013, p. 116). This model of student living and learning dates back to 13th-century England, perfected by Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom and Harvard and Yale in the US (ACUHO-I, 1998; Penven et al., 2013). Like their LLP offspring, residential colleges lend themselves to helping students achieve a variety of beneficial outcomes.

Though some may posit student retention as important for a university's financial status, it also proves extremely important for students. According to Gordon (2013) students in residential colleges more likely persist to graduation than students in other residence halls. At Centennial College at the University of Nebraska, "86 percent of the students were still enrolled in their fifth semester as compared to . . . 74 percent of all students who came from the top one-fourth of their high school classes" (p. 107).

A study of one residential college examined the impact living in a residential college has on student persistence. Students in the residential college had higher GPAs than students in traditional residence halls (Edwards & McKelfresh, 2002). Furthermore, male students in the residential college had a "predicted probability of persistence of 64.1% higher than both male and female groups" in traditional residence halls.

Residential colleges can prove particularly helpful for students at large research universities. In a survey of almost 2,000 students in 24 residential colleges at 10 large, public research universities in the United States, Jessup-Anger (2012) examined

residential colleges and their capacity to promote lifelong learning and inquiry. Students frequently interacted with faculty members in both formal and informal settings. These interactions, combined with students developing into self-regulated learners, impacted students' capacity for lifelong learning. This study also found that the "academic challenge and high expectation" (p. 454) variable that comes with many residential colleges helps students develop a propensity to inquire.

Perhaps what sets residential colleges apart from other living-learning programs proves more developmental than academic. In order to grow in healthy ways, a student must have a "growing sense of his or her identity" (Ryan, 2001, p. 94). Residential colleges allow students to bind themselves to a community and, hence, help give them a starting point for identity discovery in a healthy, supportive environment. At Yale, this binding starts with students counseling other students in their respective residential colleges; these counselors help with both academic and personal pursuits and struggles. This notion of students helping students, yoked together in a community they call their own with its own identity, makes the residential college experience unique and formative (O'Hara, 2006). Through this counseling experience and various college activities—such as master's teas, visiting lectures, literary groups, and student art shows—students feel invited into this diverse community to participate in something bigger than themselves, often discovering more about themselves in the process.

Conclusion

Student learning, occurring both inside and outside the traditional classroom, requires involvement and engagement (Astin, 1999; Kuh, 1996). Educators can encourage student involvement by creating successful learning environments that use

active learning techniques and appeal to diverse ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Residence halls provide students ample opportunities to become involved in their environment. In the residence hall, students develop decision-making processes and gain critical thinking skills they can use both in and out of the classroom (Flannagan et. al., 1993; Pascarella et. al., 1993). Living-learning programs benefit students in a very deep and broad way. Students in LLPs more likely persist to graduation than non-LLP students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980) and less likely engage in risky behaviors such as unprotected sex and binge drinking (Brower, 2008)

Residential colleges offer a specific type of living-learning environment, one founded upon a centuries-old concept of living in a learning community full of both students and faculty and ripe with traditions and culture all its own (Ryan, 2001). Students in residential colleges, like students in living-learning programs, more likely persist to graduation than non-residential college students (Gordon, 2013). Furthermore, students in residential colleges develop a stronger sense of identity with the help of their newfound community (Ryan, 2001) and a desire for lifelong learning through formal and informal gatherings with faculty members (Jessup-Anger, 2012). While some studies examined the impact of residential colleges on students, there remains a lack of research in this area. The current study aimed to fill this research gap by examining the impact residential colleges have on student learning and development.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The present study primarily sought to understand the impact residential colleges have on student learning and development. The study utilized a phenomenological qualitative design with the purpose to understand the essence of a shared experience or phenomenon. In phenomenological research, the researcher works with the participants' "specific statements and experiences" to describe "what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 252). In essence, the researcher in a phenomenological study attempts to understand what the participants in the phenomenon experience. This understanding requires the researcher to determine the "underlying structures of an experience by interpreting the originally given descriptions of the situation in which the experience occurs" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

Previous studies used a similar approach, though none used this approach to exclusively examine the impacts of living in a residential college. Jessup-Anger, Johnson, and Wawrzynski (2012) used a phenomenological design to explore men's identity construction while living in a living-learning community. Similarly, Kuh (1993) investigated what students learn outside the classroom. Using a mixed method approach, the qualitative portion phenomenological in its design, Kuh developed 14 categories of learning and personal development that occurred outside the classroom. Because no

phenomenological study examines a residential college's impact on student learning and development, the present study filled this gap in the research.

Participants

The present study took place at a large, four-year public university on the central East Coast of the United States. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2011) classified this university as a research university with high research activity and high undergraduate enrollment. In the 2013-2014 school year, 23,976 undergraduate students enrolled in the university (University Factbook, 2013). Men outnumbered women in 2013-2014, comprising 58.68% of the undergraduate population. Caucasian students encompass 68.3% of undergraduate students; the largest non-Caucasian race represented at the university holds the title "non-resident alien" (9.1% of the student body). Most undergraduate students enroll in the engineering, science, or business colleges (enrollment in these colleges comprises 61% of overall undergraduate enrollment), while the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences makes up 13.34% of undergraduate enrollment. While faculty and staff members prove heavily involved in the life of a residential college (Sriram et al., 2011), the researcher chose students for the study to discover the impact the experience had on students.

All interview participants resided in one of two residential colleges, both at the same university: the Honors Residential College (HRC) or West Residential College (WRC). Both residential colleges are open to undergraduate students, called junior fellows. Graduate students (graduate fellows) live in each building, responsible for helping mentor students and creating community programing. The two residential colleges differ in two significant ways.

Two residential colleges. First, West Residential College proves significantly larger than the HRC, with approximately 800 students separated into four "houses" of roughly equal size, while the HRC houses roughly 350 students. An associate faculty principal who lives off sight leads each house in WRC; students in the HRC do not divide into houses. One faculty principal lives in each residential college.

The second significant difference concerns the requirements of admittance. Students in WRC must submit an application but have no specific requirements for admittance; all university students can apply, though preference goes to those students who commit to "[being] involved in a dynamic community that emphasizes student engagement, academic success, and a high level dedication to being a good citizen" (University website, 2014). Students in the HRC must serve as honors students and maintain a 3.5 GPA throughout their time in the residential college. When entering as a freshman, students in both residential colleges sign a two-year residency agreement. Students who enter after their freshman year commit to the college for one year and can continue to commit to the residential college after their first year.

Participant information. After sending an introductory email to roughly 60 students, the researcher received 20 student replies to the interview request. The researcher disqualified one student due to that student's status as a graduate student. In consultation with the participants, the researcher scheduled 19 interviews during a weekend in November (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). One student failed to attend his interview; by Sunday morning, the researcher collected 15 interviews and, having met the maximum of 15 interviews, canceled the remaining three interviews. The interviews took place in the residential college, some in a private office and others in a faculty lounge.

Eight of the 15 participants identified as male; the majority (11) of the participants came from the HRC. Juniors over-represented with 5 participants; three seniors and three freshmen participated, as well as 4 sophomores (Table 1). The researcher assigned each participant a pseudonym for confidentiality. Most participants moved into their residential college during their first semester freshmen year.

Table 1

Participant Information

Name	Gender	Age	Classification	Res.
Susan	Female	21	Junior	HRC
Mark	Male	21	Senior	HRC
Sean	Male	20	Junior	HRC
Persephone	Female	20	Junior	WRC
Kayla	Female	19	Sophomore	HRC
Jake	Male	21	Senior	WRC
Grayson	Male	18	Freshman	WRC
Cody	Male	19	Sophomore	HRC
Charlotte	Female	20	Junior	HRC
Josie	Female	20	Sophomore	WRC
Drew	Male	22	Senior	HRC
Houston	Male	20	Sophomore	HRC
Taylor	Female	18	Freshman	HRC
Haley	Female	20	Junior	HRC
B.J.	Male	18	Freshman	HRC

Three students did not move into the residential college during their freshman year or did not live in the residential college continuously. Sean moved in as a freshman and studied abroad for one semester during his sophomore year. Drew moved in as a sophomore and studied abroad for one semester. Jake lived in both residential colleges. He moved into the HRC as a freshman and did not maintain the GPA requirement (3.5) to

live there. He decided to move into WRC upon his departure from the HRC and has lived in WRC since his sophomore year.

Procedure and Protocol

The researcher, through a contact at the university who works with the residential colleges in an advisory role, obtained a list of students the contact deemed eligible for the study. Since qualitative research prefers purposeful sampling so as to gain a high quality of depth from each interview, this method proved suitable for gaining participants. The university contact emailed the students and introduced the researcher. The researcher emailed the participants asking if they would willingly participate in the study. After students agreed to participate, the researcher informed each student when he would arrive on campus to conduct interviews and inquired about times each participant could do a 30-45 minute interview. The participants sent times to the researcher, and the researcher chose and confirmed the interview time with each participant.

The researcher had questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the experience of the participant to help guide the interview (Patton, 2002). Each interview followed roughly 10 to 12 open-ended questions, as well as basic demographic information such as age, major, and classification. Each interview took place in one of three places: an empty office, an occupied office (the occupant absent for the interviews) or a faculty lounge (without faculty present). The researcher digitally recorded each interview after receiving informed consent from the participant.

The researcher employed maximal variation sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, to select students for the study (Creswell, 2008). The researcher used this type

of sampling to gain a variety of perspectives from the various classifications represented in the residential college.

The researcher conducted a pilot study with three residential college students at another university. These interviews allowed the researcher to test the protocol to ensure it would gather rich responses. These pilot interviews also gave the researcher an opportunity to receive feedback on the questions asked of the participants and rephrase questions as necessary.

Data Analysis

After conducting the interviews, the researcher ascribed a pseudonym to each participant to protect anonymity. The researcher transcribed the interviews on a computer, printed each interview, and read each interview while looking for themes between interviews. The researcher coded each interview based on the themes that emerged. After examining the themes that emerged from each interview, the researcher triangulated the results by "[finding] evidence to support [each] theme" (Creswell, 2008, p. 266). The researcher employed member checking to determine the accuracy of the findings. Member checking allowed the researcher to "[ask] one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy" of the findings (p. 267). The researcher contacted 10 participants for member checking purposes.

The current study utilized a phenomenological design to examine the impact of residential colleges on student learning and development. After interviewing 15 participants at a large public university, the researcher transcribed and coded the data and formed themes from the codes. The researcher presented the results in Chapter 4 and discussed the findings in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Results

After the researcher coded, triangulated, member-checked, and analyzed the data, three themes emerged, with two having multiple sub-themes. Each of these themes contributed to one meta-theme of community. Each student interviewed discussed at length the closeness of their community and their desire to "[be] with other people and [strive] toward the same sort of ideals." This meta-theme of community stemmed from the following three themes: the impact of structure, belonging and identity, and the impact of an interdisciplinary and multigenerational environment.

Impact of Structure

The structure of the residential college contributed significantly to students' experiences. This theme divided into two sub-themes: physical structure and philosophical structure.

Physical structure. The two residential colleges home to the students interviewed had received recent refurbishment, making them into the residential colleges as they stand today. The university, in refurbishing the buildings, created several types of spaces that helped contribute to student learning and development. These spaces included apartments for graduate fellows and apartment fellows. These spaces, while housing students, remain reserved for upperclassmen who desire to take a leadership role in the college. Apartment fellows must to host events in their apartment and receive a budget to

steward. Jake, an apartment fellow in WRC, once hosted a wing night at which he "ran out of our 200 some wings in the first 10 minutes." He recognized his role did not entail simply feeding people, though, but rather putting on events and acting as the peer leader. Three members mentioned another popular event: High Brow/Low Brow, hosted by Mark and Cody's apartment. "You choose two movies, one really good one and one really bad one. And you flip a coin to determine which one you watch," Cody said. These well-attended events allow students various learning opportunities such as event planning, leadership skill building, and the value of community, as well as how to learn from failure if their event garners poor attendance.

Another important type of space in the residential colleges comes as the variety of multipurpose spaces in the building. The buildings share a large lobby with plenty of movable seating. As the researcher conducted interviews on Friday afternoon, a group of students, led by Josie, gathered in the lobby for a "jam session." Josie said that playing music "really brings people together." She also said gathering together helps "really contribute to that community feeling I got when I visited" as a prospective student. The Junior Common Room, shared by the HRC and WRC, also appears a frequently utilized multipurpose space. B.J., a member of the HRC, mentioned he frequently meets new people as he plays the piano. The Great Room, also shared by both residential colleges, can serve as a large classroom or partitioned into several small classrooms, which Drew uses for his freshman seminar class he leads.

A variety of other multipurpose spaces exist throughout the residential colleges. Several lounges can host group study, individual study, or, in Jake's case, a Smash Brother's party. B.J. also said the lounges serve as great places for board games or any

other get together for a smaller group. However, the lounges prove so heavily utilized that sometimes "you take about 20 minutes out of your board game time trying to find an open lounge." The Crossover, the large multipurpose space on the 6th floor that connects the two residential colleges, has a pool table, full kitchen, TV, and plenty of seating. B.J. said, "Every weekend somebody's cooking something and is willing to share with anybody who walks in the kitchen." He also said hailed the Crossover as "a great area for people to hang out . . . you meet an unbelievable amount of people in the crossover."

These multipurpose spaces create a wealth of opportunities for students to interact and build relationships with each other and with faculty members. Sometimes, these interactions seem very informal, such as the board games B.J and his friends play, and, other times, they appear formal interactions, such as during Drew's freshman seminar. Perhaps more important than the events that take place, conversations occur in these spaces. Many students discussed at length the deep conversations that occur in these communal spaces. Haley, when talking about the nature of her conversations with her community, said,

> I think here we explore the touchy subjects. You know, the things that really aren't talked about. Sometimes you'll come into the lobby and they'll be having conversation. I'll walk over and they'll be like, "this is a deep conversation we're having right now, if you want come back", you know, cause you really do open up to people here. Maybe its just the idea of living and learning kind of coming down to different social aspects that we have but definitely conversations happen about things that, you know, other groups wouldn't be comfortable with.

Students build relationships with each other and with faculty, and through those relationships come the ability to have tough conversations. These relationships often start with interactions in a variety of common spaces.

Philosophical structure. Each residential college has a strong philosophical structure built upon the basic residential college model discussed in previous chapters. Two philosophical cornerstones help establish these residential colleges as strong living and learning environments for students: self-governance and the weekly rhythm of the college.

Both residential colleges follow a self-governing structure with a variety of leadership positions for students, including resident assistant, college president, or historian. Also, various committees exist, such as the service initiatives committee, which Kayla directs. Members of the HRC elected her to the position, a nod to the practice students receive in practicing good citizenship and community involvement.

According to Persephone, the co-president of WRC, each of the four houses in WRC has or is currently working to attain, a community charter. These charters, written and voted on by students, help establish each house's guiding principals. Persephone said the house system "allows some students, especially those interested in politics, to start setting up their own little system and see how things work and run."

Along with these charters and committees comes the college council. Each residential college has its own college council, with meetings open to all students. Haley, the director of communications in the HRC, said, "I love being on council because it allows me to like, make a difference in the community and actually talking to people, seeing what they want and saying hey, you know, we can actually get that done for you."

Sean, who does not hold a formal position on the college council, said he attends as much as he can: "Even though I don't officially have [a] vote or anything on what decisions they make, I like knowing what the 'higher ups' in the building are thinking and what plans they have for the building. " Some students, like Jake, also participate in the conduct committee for the residential colleges.

Despite a substantial number of ways to get involved in leadership and self-governance in the hall, not all students participate, a large concern for some students, especially Grayson.

> I wish more people participated . . . cause a lot of people don't. When we have our co-president election, only 64 people voted out of 850, and I know about 30 of those people because I made sure they voted.

However, some students find ways to carve a new leadership role into the college. Grayson, who holds no formal positions in the college, started the "Bible Brigade" in WRC. He rescued the small Gideon Bibles passed out on campus from damage and instead hid them all over campus and created a fun scavenger hunt for his community.

The weekly rhythm, or liturgy (repetitive events which orient participants toward a specific end), of the college played prominently in student responses. This system of weekly events and activities clearly encouraged involvement in college life and provided formal opportunities for students to interact with each other, faculty, and guests from campus. These formal interactions often formed the foundation for informal interactions that took place later. Susan discussed her experience at the HRC's weekly fellowship dinner and Faculty Tea, a weekly Friday afternoon tea hosted by the faculty principal. She said it felt "really nerve-racking to be a freshman and feel like I have nothing to say

to directors of…the division of student affairs." Eventually she could not only talk to faculty and staff present at these events, but she even started inviting faculty to them, believing she would "robbing them [of a wonderful opportunity] if I don't get to introduce them to everyone else." Susan now serves as an RA and president of the HRC.

One impact this weekly rhythm had on students came with the activity prioritization such a schedule requires of students. Many students discussed their busyness, a staple of college life today. However, a majority of students interviewed expressed an ability to balance, and several expressed their desire to prioritize residential college activities just under homework but over everything else on campus. Haley, a landscape architecture major, said "I have studio for 12 hours in class a week. So when I do have the time, I like to spend my extra time going to these events rather than campus events." One student, B.J., said the amount of events in the HRC encourage students to get their work done so they can become involved in community life.

One philosophical distinction of the residential college emerges in the emphasis on programming. With something happening, many events occur outside the traditional weekly events. Apartment fellows, like Sean and Mark, host some of these events. Mark said these smaller, sometimes impromptu events "helped [him] meet a lot of people. . . . That's how [he] got into some of [his] other activities that [he does] outside of the HRC." Charlotte shared how she believes these events help her continue to learn:

> I feel like, like the big and the small activities kind of keep me growing in a learning sense but not like, purely academic like, oh here's a textbook lets sit down and read it. More just like, everybody in the dorm has so many different interests and passions that they're open about and they want to share with other people and they also want to be shared with and I find myself constantly learning things day by day about things they know.

Both the physical and philosophical structures of the residential colleges encourage involvement and create space for student, faculty, and staff interaction. These structures helped establish residential college life and impacted student learning and development.

Belonging and Identity

Students in both residential colleges expressed they felt they belonged in and to their communities. One comment several students made concerned their feeling of similarity with the people around them. This phenomenon proved most evident in the HRC. Sean said he wanted to live in honors housing because he thought "being surrounded by similarly minded and motivated people seemed like a good idea." Several students in both residential colleges expressed gratitude for living in a residential environment absent of students who frequently party. Multiple students also noted a lack a drinking compared to areas in which their friends live on campus.

The residential colleges provide a smaller community within the larger campus, and, in West Residential College, even smaller communities exist. Persephone, in her explanation of the house system in WRC, said, "Within our houses we each have our own sense of community." Students take pride in their house and in the identity of that house. Some young house communities are "still working on finding an identifier for

themselves, but they're there and they know who they are." These communities help students have an identity on campus, especially one as large as this university. One impact of such strong, close-knit community reflects in how some community members interact with those outside the residential college. B.J. expressed his concern that he was "just going to stay within the HRC." Charlotte said she "live[s], breathe[s], eat[s] the HRC." This dedication proved common among the participants, but several acknowledged their dedication impacts their involvement elsewhere on campus.

These communities also provide students with a true home away from home. Taylor noted the residential college activities in which she engaged "helped [her] realize that there are people around [her] who support [her]. It's not that [she has] to do everything on [her] own . . . it's a giant family . . . [that will] help you achieve your goals." Kayla, when asked what she receives from living in the residential college, responded by describing her situation.

> I get a family . . . my family is 3000 miles away. And I talk to my mom on the phone for like, three times a week, but that's not really the same as having a family that cares about you…so I live on 5th high. And like, 5th high is my family you know, if I'm ever upset, they notice . . . I still have people here who will take care of me and they love me and its just so nice to have a kind of family away from my family. I think that's definitely what I get most from living here. You feel like you belong, you feel like you're loved.

Haley expressed she felt at home in the HRC, referring to the HRC as "home base." She also claimed, "Combining my education and my home and where all my friends are into one place . . . helped me open up as a student and as a community member." With the

residential colleges acting as a home for students, the residential colleges offer a surrounding community of care, crossing familial boundaries and reaching into the academic realm as well.

Finally, students reported that their involvement in and belonging to the community helped them feel purposeful. Kayla said her involvement in the college, particularly her involvement as the director of service initiatives, gave her a "sense of purpose." She expressed her desire for people to come to her events and recognized "that makes me want to show up to everyone else's events because the more people that are there the more fun it is, the more successful it is and the better the community becomes." Houston said his involvement in the residential college helped him cultivate his leadership skills. He said the HRC created space for him to use these skills, which gives him a "greater sense of purpose" in his community. "I've really come to the idea here that I want to . . . be an integral part of helping this community grow," he said, having applied as an RA for the following school year.

Impact of an Interdisciplinary and Multigenerational Environment

The philosophical structure of the residential college model establishes a multigenerational and interdisciplinary living and learning environment. In the current study, every student discussed the impact this environment had on his or her experiences.

Interdisciplinary environment. Only one major repeated among the 15 students, and the students with that major paired the major with something else. Students found this interdisciplinary environment enriching. Kayla said,

> It's really interesting for me to learn from people who are in different majors because they have a very different perspective on things . . . it's nice to have people to come from different angles in order to understand things.

Charlotte echoed Kayla's appreciation of the diversity in interests represented in the colleges:

> Everybody in the dorm has so many different interests and passions that they're open about and they want to share with other people…I find myself constantly learning things day by day…I just really enjoy being around all those interesting facts I pick up all the time…[I enjoy] all these different perspectives I didn't really think about before.

Living with such a diverse group of high-achieving peers, some students found their beliefs challenged from time to time. Haley said this challenge "made me more confident with my choices. . . . Instead of . . . defending [my choices] as 'this is just how I live' I say 'this is why.'" Jake, a self-proclaimed arrogant person who admitted that life in the residential college helped him become less arrogant, explained that the surrounding group of diverse people helped him learn his own strengths and weaknesses. "I'm not an interior decorator," he said in a short anecdote about setting up for a college event, "and I'm glad I took people's advice . . . [I've learned] how to deal with people better."

As another impact of the interdisciplinary culture of the residential colleges, students became more open-minded. Drew said, "The HRC has caused me to become more open minded, more tolerant, just because there's so many different people here . . . so many different people from diverse backgrounds, different beliefs." Houston

mentioned that many "intellectual debates" occur in the HRC, which caused him to become more mature, self-aware, and more aware of others as well.

Many participants spoke of their growing appreciation of multiple perspectives. Persephone expected to only have friends in her major, but "I have friends that are English majors, engineers, people in biological sciences and all over [the university's] educational system." She also felt fascinated "to see the different types of people that are here. I really like being able to compare what I grew up with and then talk to somebody else and see what they're experience was." Taylor, when asked how her beliefs changed, asserted her beliefs had not changed; rather, she gained a "different perspective" through a seminar class she takes in the HRC but did not plan "to incorporate those [new perspectives] immediately."

Most students recognized the various viewpoints of those around them and expressed appreciation for the diversity of viewpoints and interests in the residential college. Haley said residential college life helped her realize "not everyone has the same experiences coming into college and that really changes . . . their viewpoint of the world, and it's really interesting to have conversations with those people." Interestingly, the environment impacted students like Grayson who self-identified as shy or less outgoing:

> When I came here I was really shy, I've opened a lot more since being here since the community is so great with that. The people are just really…inspiring and supportive…One of my hobbies is that I love to write. And my friends in high school were like, "oh, you write, that's cute." But some of my friends here are like "oh you should totally submit this to a newspaper or something." People want me to do more of that.

Kayla also said the residential college open and diverse environment helped her feel accepted and welcomed. "People here . . . accept me for who I actually am. . . . The people in high school that people would . . . be rude to or make fun of and call nerds, they're the cool people in our [college]" she claimed. "It's so nice to be able to like, if you're passionate about something that might be kind of nerdy, that's cool!"

Taylor felt shocked by the diversity in the HRC. "It's hard to adjust to people who have so many different interests than me," she said. She then affirmed the positive effects of differences and noted the differences not as negatives but rather just a "shock."

Multigenerational environment. With faculty and staff working and living among students from all four classifications, as well as graduate students, in both residential colleges, students have many opportunities to interact with faculty and staff in formal and informal settings. Most participants interviewed discussed their experiences with mentorship and advising, networking, and feeling more confortable with faculty.

Faculty members mentor and advise a variety of students in the college. Charlotte, the historian in the HRC, helps the college stay in touch with its history. Dr. Jones, the faculty principal, and James, the student life coordinator, aid her in that endeavor. Dr. Jones and Charlotte tried to create "a efficient way to archive photos" while James helped her retrieve email addresses of former college residents. B.J., a philosophy major, connected with a philosophy professor who happens to serve also as a senior fellow in the college. Senior fellows, or faculty members who do not live in the building, remain involved in and committed to the college. B.J. said this professor seems "always involved with what's going on," and B.J. hopes the professor can help him conduct research in the near future.

Sean also built a relationship with a faculty member. He met a senior fellow freshman year and "got along really well with her and just went back every month or two to update her on my life and ask how things are going." Surprisingly to Sean, "Her research wasn't relevant to what I was doing but I thought it was really interesting . . . [now] she's almost like a mentor to me in a lot of respects . . . I feel like I can go to her with like anything."

Students also mentor other students formally and informally. Taylor participates in a formal mentorship program in the HRC. As a freshman, she paired with an upperclassman who she now goes to for "social help, academic help, anything that I could possibly need." While she admitted most students do not utilize their mentor substantially, most participants mentored others or received mentorship through less formal avenues. Haley, a junior, appreciates that many freshman on the hall to have a junior "who can support them and give them tips and almost be a mentor for them." While a freshman, Haley found it "motivating" to see older students succeed.

B.J. shared an interesting note about mentorship. As a freshman, he moved into the HRC and received an important tip from a random upperclassman on his floor.

> [It was] a few hours into me living here and I had my door closed and somebody knocked on my door and said, "Hey, you should keep your door open, its really cool." So I was like, alright, sounds good.…It's just an active wanting to meet you, an active wanting to get to know you as opposed to [just being] where you sleep. [I didn't] think, don't do anything illegal in front of that guy. Its so much more of a hey, we want to get to know you.

Several other students echoed this informal "open door policy," including Josie. Having an open door created opportunities for many informal interactions. "When I pass people's doors and they are open, I'll knock if I don't know them I'll introduce myself. I ask them how their day's going, and I encourage people to [keep their door open]," Josie said of her experience on the floor.

One interesting aspect of the multigenerational environment came with the feeling of networking noted by several students. Mark, in response to a question about what he received most from living in the college, said, "Social capital. People I've met, senior fellows I've met and the opportunities they've pointed me toward, that's by far one of the best things about living in the HRC is social networking." Mark said one faculty member even pointed him in the direction of a Fulbright Summer Institute in which he participated. Other students echoed his sentiment. Cody said the events in the residential college helped him network with senior fellows, including the Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Another facet of the multigenerational environment concerns students' feelings toward faculty and staff. Haley explained the residential college has "faculty and staff that you talk to like neighbors, not like a professor . . . over a formal email. . . . You ask them how they are . . . how their break was. . . . It's a different dynamic that I like." She went on to say she loves talking to professors during tea because "It's almost like you've entered this zone of like, mutual ideas that you're a professor yes, and I'm a student, but right now we're [going to] meet in the middle and talk as individuals."

This faculty-student interaction enters the traditional classroom as well. Josie said her interactions with faculty and staff helped her feel "comfortable with . . . going up . . .

talking to my professors after class." This confidence aided her in interactions with fellow students as well. Several students noted a rise in self-confidence and a personal "coming out of their shell." Grayson self-identified as such a student.

> I'm not as introverted as I thought. . . . I'm not afraid to do something like, in public or . . . I kind of want to organize a flash mob, I think it would be kind of fun. I would have never done that in high school. But here its something I think I can do with confidence. Oh, and more confident . . . [and] less introverted.

Each residential college attracts high-achieving students, and some participants admitted they had felt more introverted or had lacked social confidence before coming to college. Grayson's example reflects many other students' experiences in the residential college.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The present study examined students' experiences in residential colleges and the impact of those experiences on students' learning and development. Three themes emerged from the study: the impact of structure, belonging and identity, and the impact of an interdisciplinary and multigenerational environment. Each residential college in which the participants lived embodied what Penven et al. (2013) posited as the common characteristics of a residential college: "a commitment to [interdisciplinarity]; multigenerational organization (an assumption that students from all classifications—first-year through graduate students—strengthen the learning environment); live-in faculty leadership; and mission-centric spaces that speak to the holistic nature of the learning philosophy" (p. 116). These common characteristics proved important factors that contributed to each theme in the study.

Several studies (Inkelas & Wiseman, 2003; Inkelas et. al., 2006) found students in living-learning programs, such as residential colleges, appear stronger academically upon entering college, as these students have significantly higher test scores and GPAs than their traditional residence hall counterparts. This finding proves important to note, especially since some students came in the current study lived in an honors residential college. The fact that high-achieving students choose these living-learning programs does not discount the impact of residential colleges on these high-achieving students. On

the contrary, the present study established that high-achieving students can, and should, still learn and develop in college, and residential colleges offer one avenue for this learning and development to occur. While residential colleges provide students with opportunities traditional residence hall students fail to have (e.g. structures that encourage faculty involvement), students' involvement and engagement remains vital to the residential college's impact.

Involvement emerged as one aspect of student experiences that, though perhaps implicit, still merits discussion (Astin, 1999). The students interviewed may have had some of the same experiences, such as informal faculty contact or involvement in informal events, without involvement in formal events established by the residential college. However, several participants explained formal events gave them a safe structure within which to build the foundation for friendships and relationships, particularly with faculty. Some students said the opposite; informal contact encouraged them to go to more formal events in anticipation of friends' attendance. Either way, the formal and informal seemed compliment each other and provide different motivation for involvement for different types of students.

The study by Jessup-Anger (2012) of residential colleges found residential colleges, particularly the impact of frequent faculty-student interaction, influenced students' capacity for inquiry and lifelong learning. While the current study did not come to the same conclusion concerning lifelong learning, the students displayed a high level of inquiry. Many students commented on their desire to learn from the diverse group of people around them, including faculty, even if they differed in their academic focus.

Perhaps the most interesting of the themes that emerged from the present study came as the theme of belonging and identity. Absent from most research reviewed, save for Astin (1993), the concept of belonging played a major role in student experiences. Students felt they belonged in and to their community. Some of the structures in place in the residential college aided this feeling of belonging. Perhaps even more interesting than students' feelings of belonging and identity in the residential college, they desired that sense of belonging and identity. Participants frequently discussed their desire for a community to which they could belong. Many students equated this community to a community of alikeness (students and faculty "like them.") However, even with this alikeness very present in the experiences of students, diversity shone through and clearly impacted students' experiences. While student may desire to live with those like them, living with a diverse group of students adds another dimension to the student experience. Living with a diverse group encourages students to learn from those around them and teaches students to become open-minded and appreciate multiple perspectives, though students must engage, informally or formally, for this learning and development to occur.

Astin (1993) linked a sense of belonging with persistence. Edwards and McKelfresh (2002) determined male students in residential colleges had a higher chance of persistence than males in traditional residence halls. While the study at hand did not examine persistence, one student's story did relate to his ability to persist. Jake left the HRC after his first year due to his inability to maintain the required 3.5 GPA. He went to WRC where he also found a sense of belonging and concluded that WRC also has a "high standard of community."

One high standard—a commitment to academics and, as such, a lack of partying and heavy drinking—frequently appeared in student interviews. This finding proved consistent with the findings of other studies of living-learning programs (Brower, 2008). While no students labeled drinking as absent in the residential colleges, several participents noted that students at both of the residential colleges drink more responsibly and party less than friends in other residence halls. As no students in the study lived in a traditional residence hall, making a comparison between students in LLPs and students in traditional residence halls would prove unwise. However, the structures in place, as well as the multigenerational structure, aided in the development of a culture of healthy alcohol consumption. Older students inspired younger students to act a certain way (e.g., to drink responsibly). Furthermore, the amount of evening activities, both formal and informal, encouraged students to remain in the building. Several students mentioned rarely socializing outside of their residential college. The residential college became their community, and the students desired to reflect the values of their community.

Implications

The findings of the present study highlighted three important implications. The first implication concerns students and their desire to belong. Students interviewed in the study desired to belong to something bigger than themselves, and residential colleges help students feel like they belong. Universities should recognize this desire as something more than just another need from demanding college students; they should see this longing as a way to help students persist and develop. The students interviewed felt willing to accept the challenge from their community to consider multiple perspectives. While the researcher could not prove whether or not students felt willing to accept such a

challenge from those outside of their community, frequent formal and informal interactions apparently helped create a foundation upon which this challenge could stand. Furthermore, the multigenerational structure of the two residential colleges helped establish a history and several traditions upon which students could build. At a time when many universities find cheaper alternatives to house students, one must ask the following question: what becomes sacrificed by moving to cheaper housing alternatives? Perhaps student belonging, persistence, and development become a few of those sacrifices.

The second implication of the current study concerns university administrators and faculty. The study established strong evidence for the positive outcomes of faculty-student interactions. Institutions should encourage these formal and informal interactions, and established systems should help create opportunities for faculty involvement and reward faculty involvement outside the traditional four-walled classroom. Informal faculty interactions allowed several students in the study to feel more comfortable with faculty in the classroom, which led to these students seeking faculty members for advice and mentoring. While the present study did not interview faculty members, previous studies (Sriram et. al., 2011) established that faculty members benefit from this involvement as well. Universities should examine avenues to help increase faculty involvement, such as creating live-in faculty roles or integrating faculty involvement in the lives of students into the tenure process.

A final implication pertains to the structure of self-governance within the residential colleges. Self-governance increased student involvement in two ways. First, it created numerous leadership opportunities in which students could develop leadership

and event planning skills. Second, students interviewed wanted to go to events planned by their friends. When students take charge of their own community, other students want to become more involved. Thus, university staff should take on a more advisory role in residence life and allow students to lead their own communities.

As previously discussed, residential colleges remain extremely expensive, and not every higher education institution can establish one. However, the implications of the present study impacted even those institutions that cannot, or will not, build residential colleges. Universities that house students in traditional residence halls can still achieve the outcomes achieved by residential colleges. These universities should examine ways to establish some of the systems found in residential colleges in traditional residence halls. For example, universities should create opportunities for faculty involvement in the residence halls, as well as rewards for involved faculty. Traditional residence halls should also encourage self-governance among their students.

Limitations

Several limitations emerged in the study, and one of the most important limitations began with the researcher. The researcher lived in a residential college during his undergraduate career, though at a very different institution than the one examined in the current study. This experience, including the researcher's affinity for residential colleges, contributed to the researcher's bias.

Another limitation of the study concerns the small number of students interviewed. Many participants served as student leaders in the residential college and therefore stood out as highly involved students. Their involvement, while certainly contributing to their experiences, may not prove representative of most students in the

residential college. Furthermore, as many students served as leaders, they could see behind the scenes in the residential college; they understood the residence college model and willingly bought into the model, or as one student put it, drank "the Kool-Aid." Another limitation related to the participants concerns the number of participants from the Honors Residential College. The HRC has stricter admittance standards and, as such, more likely attracted high achieving students than West Residential College. As the ratio emerged as 11:4 in favor of the HRC, and WRC holds over two-times as many students as the HRC, the HRC proved over represented in the sample.

Suggestions for Future Research

As previously mentioned, substantial research addressed living-learning programs. However, the research specifically concerning residential colleges proved minimal at best. Future researchers examining residential colleges should investigate four particular topics within this field.

First, future researchers should examine the impact of residential colleges on provisional students. Many participants interviewed in the current study appeared high-achieving students. It remains important to know how residential colleges impact students who do not fall into this high-achieving category. Do the systems in place in a residential college encourage involvement for provisional students? Do residential colleges equally impact normal students? These questions prove especially important considering the nationwide push for more lower-income, first-generation students in colleges and universities.

Future research should also investigate the impact residential colleges have on student-faculty partnerships. Several students in the study mentioned partnering with

faculty on a variety of research projects. Some students also mentioned partnering with former undergraduate-turned graduate students on research endeavors. Future research should examine whether residential colleges help establish these partnerships and if these partnerships become impacted by the sense of comfort many students in residential colleges feel toward faculty members.

The final two future research suggestions concern the long-term effects of residential colleges. First, researchers should examine what long-term effects of residential colleges influence both students and faculty. Perhaps a researcher could examine the impact residential colleges have on intellectual development, particularly a student's ability to hold a multiplicity of views. Researchers should also examine the impact of residential colleges on students' search for vocation and purpose. Several students mentioned feeling a sense of purpose in the residential college. Do students who live in residential colleges think more about purpose than students in traditional residential halls? Do residential colleges impact a student's search for vocation when introduced to a diverse group of students? Researchers should investigate these questions, as well as any other questions concerning residential colleges and students' pursuit of vocation and purpose.

Conclusions

Residential colleges do not exist a thing of the past nor a forgotten mode of student living and learning. Residential colleges, driven by the assumption that students and faculty living life together positively impacts student learning and development, have reemerged as a potential living and learning model. These homes for faculty and students impact students in three ways. First, they create structures, both philosophical (self-

governance) and physical (e.g., multi-purpose spaces), that encourage involvement, help students to develop leadership skills, and create spaces for faculty and student interaction. Second, residential colleges, through their multigenerational and interdisciplinary structure, allow students to encounter a diverse set of philosophies and beliefs. Students become more open-minded and learn how to hold a multiplicity of views different from their own. Students also can strengthen their own views after weighing the views of others. Through the multigenerational structure of the residential colleges, students learn the value of mentoring and build formal and informal relationships with faculty members.

Finally, though many students recognize the diversity in the colleges, those same students view the residential college as filled with students "like them," allowing for the residential college to feel like home. Students feel they belong to and in the residential college. This belonging and identity gives students a sense of purpose; students feel they belong to a family and, as such, feel a commitment to support their family members in their own endeavors and pursuits.

The present study demonstrated the impact of residential colleges on student learning and development is significant. Residential colleges remain unique in their structure, philosophy, and outcomes. Learning and development prove unbound by walls and unrestricted to the Ivory Tower; learning and development occurs at home, by living life with people in community and by investing and engaging with that community. Further research, as well as encouraging faculty to become more involved in their students' lives outside the traditional classroom, could help establish residential colleges as one of the most important, high-impact student learning models in the 21st century.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

Demographic Information

- How old are you?
- What is your gender?
- What is your classification in school?
- What is your major?
- How long have you lived here in the residential college?
- What classification were you when you moved into the residential college?

Research Questions

- Why did you decide to live in this residential college?
- What were your hopes for your experience living here?
- How does residential college life impact your personal schedule?
- In what activities are you involved in the residential college? Outside the residential college?
- How have these activities (the residential college activities) impacted you?
- How do you interact (in what context) with others in the residential college?
- Please tell me about your relationships with non-undergraduate students in the residential college.
- How does life inside the residential college impact your life outside the residential college?
- How have you changed since you began living in the residential college?
- Have your beliefs changed since living here? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
- What do you think you receive most from living in this residential college?
- Have there been any negative aspects or drawbacks of living in this residential college?

Closing Question

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

THE IMPACT OF RESIDENTIAL COLLEGES ON STUDENT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

You are invited to participate in a research study of the Impact of Residential Colleges on Student Learning and Development. You were selected as a possible subject because you were identified as someone who is a student and would have insight and experience concerning residential colleges and their impact on student learning and development]. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you many have before agreeing to be in the study.

The study is being conducted by Seth Oldham, graduate student at Taylor University in the Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development Program. It is funded solely by the researcher.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to understand the impacts of living in a residential college on a student's learning and personal development.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of between 8-15 subjects who will be participating in this research, depending on the participant response rate.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:
You will be interviewed for 30-45 minutes by the researcher. During this interview, you will be asked a variety of questions including questions to obtain general demographic information, questions pertaining to life in a residential college, and how that life as impact you. You will be recorded via a digital recorder; only the researcher will have access to the recording or subsequent documents containing your interview. The interview will take place at [the participant's university]; it will be a one-time interview with no follow-up interviews. However, the participants will be sent a summary (called coding) of the interview to ensure the researcher interpreted and understood the participant during the interview.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
While on the study, the risks are:

1. Similar to everyday life. You will be answering a series of questions that relate to your personal experience. You may speak on a topic that brings up personal memories that may be emotionally difficult to handle. You will also be sitting for about one hour, so any health risks that could rise from prolonged sitting should be kept in mind.
2. By participating in this study, you risk the possible loss of confidentiality. If you mention any sexual assault that occurred when you were a minor, or your intent to commit a crime, I have an obligation to report that.
3. By participating in the study, you also risk the possible loss of confidentiality due to the fact that you are sharing your story with someone else. Parts of your story may be reproduced or published with steps taken to ensure anonymity.

While completing the survey, you can tell the researcher that you feel uncomfortable or do not care to answer a particular question at any time. You may also ask to turn off the recording device at any time, and it will be turned off.
If you feel emotionally distraught or frustrated after completing the interview, you are encouraged to go to the [the participant's university] Counseling Center.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
There is no direct benefit to you, the participant, by participating in the study.

ALTERNATIVES TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
Instead of being in the study, you have the choice to not participate in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published. Only the researcher will have access to the digital audio recording of this interview. The digital audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the researcher's thesis.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, the study sponsor, Tim Herrmann, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

COSTS
Taking part in this study will not lead to added costs to you or your insurance company, unless an unrelated medical event occurs during the study. In this care, you or your insurance provider are responsible for these costs.

PAYMENT
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY
In the event of physical injury resulting from your participation in this research, necessary medical treatment will be provided to you and billed as part of your medical expenses. Costs not covered by your health care insurer will be your responsibility. Also, it is your responsibility to determine the extent of your health care coverage. There is no program in place for other monetary compensation for such injuries. If you are participating in research which is not conducted at a medical facility, you will be responsible for seeking medical care and for the expenses associated with any care received.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
Inquiries regarding the nature of this research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject can be directed to Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at 756-998-5188 or ssgavin@taylor.edu

For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher, Seth Oldham, at 254-541-9346. If you cannot reach the researcher during regular business hours (e.g. 8:00AM-5:00PM), please email seth_oldham@taylor.edu.

In the event of an emergency, you are urged to contact campus authorities at (540) 231-6411.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with [the participant's university] or Taylor University.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT
In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:** _____